

## EDUCATION

Rudd Report-card 2009: "During the past year the Australian Government has made substantial commitments to reform the nation's schools, with a strong focus on the nation's most disadvantaged schools."

A 2008 senate estimates committee found that the government spends less than half the amount on education per child in Wadeye, one of the major Aboriginal communities, than on equivalent areas in the "mainstream" NT. 94 per cent of Aboriginal communities in the NT have no pre-school and 56 per cent have no secondary school.

Instead of addressing this appalling shortfall the Rudd government has given its support to the NT government in dismantling bilingual education programs in the Northern Territory, stating that children must spend the first four hours of every school day being taught only in English, compounding disadvantage in education and seriously threatening the future of languages and culture.

## EMPLOYMENT

Rudd Report-card 2009: "Nationally, we have driven reforms through employment programs to give more Indigenous peoples the skills they need to get and keep a job"

In reality the Rudd government has slashed a major employer and trainer of Aboriginal workers – the Community Development Employment Programs (CDEP's). Tens of thousands will now have to join dole queues. This started the welfare quarantine measures were first announced, and more than thousands of CDEP participants across the NT were sacked from the program specifically so that their wages could be quarantined as 'welfare benefits'.

Now Rudd has virtually abolished the program nationally, leading to the imminent closure of vital community-based programs and services like rubbish removal, ranger programs and substance abuse support.

## RESPECT

Rudd Report-card 2009: "I also said that the Apology would help to build a bridge of respect between Indigenous and other Australians."

With the continued suspension of the Racial Discrimination Act, the Intervention policies are allowing Rudd to perpetuate an assimilationist agenda reminiscent of the policies that created the Stolen Generations.

The justifications for the Intervention are spreading racism across Australia, allowing state governments to enact their own discriminatory laws against Aboriginal communities. The realities of such racist legislation lacking any serious commitment to community consultation highlights the hypocrisy of Rudd's statements about "mutual respect articulated through mutual responsibility".

Where is the Rudd governments respect for the Aboriginal people of Australia who continue to struggle for basic rights to health, housing, education and employment?

The Arnhem Land-based community group Aboriginal Resource and Development Services says there has been little progress under the Intervention.

**"People are almost suffering culture shock for the massive amount of change that has occurred in their lives over a very short period of time,"** says chief executive Richard Trudgen.

**"You had the intervention itself, which was massive. You've had the quarantining of welfare. But we've seen no new housing. We've now got a requirement that leases be on communities before any new housing development occurs on those places. Top down changes will never work."**

Rudd's 'close the gap' rhetoric is being used as a cover for the roll-out of assimilationist policies. We need to build a movement that can reverse this trend and fight for policies that empower Aboriginal communities.

**Join STICS! Get involved!**

# STOP THE INTERVENTION COLLECTIVE SYDNEY (STICS) : MARCH BULLETIN

STICS is an open collective of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people committed to the repeal of the NT Intervention and the struggle for Aboriginal self-determination. We meet every Tuesday to discuss the campaign and plan for actions and awareness-raising. 6pm Tuesdays, downstairs, level 3, UTS Tower Building, Broadway near the students' association.

## UPCOMING EVENTS:

### ===> Tuesday 24th March 6pm

Taking forward the campaign against the Intervention  
With Valerie Martin from Yuendumu and Irene Fisher from Katherine.

Downstairs, level 3, UTS Tower Building, Broadway near the students' association

===> **Monday 30th March 1pm**- Stop the Intervention - Land Rights not Leases - Quarantine Racism not Welfare! Picket of Kevin Rudd's Office. Kevin Rudd's Office Phillip Street Sydney. Speakers include Valerie Martin.

### ===> Tuesday 7th April 6pm -Trade Unions and the fight for Aboriginal rights:

Fred Moore – former General Secretary of the Illawarra Trades and Labour Council and founder of the Illawarra Aboriginal Advancement League.

Uncle Dootch Kennedy – Chair of the Illawarra Lands Council.

This meeting will discuss the role unions have played in supporting and building the struggle for Aboriginal Rights from the 1967 referendum to land rights. We will talk about what unions can do to support Aboriginal communities in the NT to stop the Intervention.

NSW Teachers' Federation. Call Jean for more information 0449 646 593.

### ===> Saturday June 20th

2 years since the introduction of the NT Intervention.  
Repeal it now! .

Rally, march and hip-hop at the Block.



# www.stoptheintervention.org

## THE GAP BETWEEN RUDD'S RHETORIC AND HIS POLICIES WIDENS:

When Prime Minister Kevin Rudd made his historic apology to the Stolen Generations at the opening of Parliament in 2008 he also pledged to 'close the gap' in key social indicators such as health, housing, life expectancy, educational and employment opportunities.

The tragic truth is that we can only expect things to go backwards for Aboriginal people under a Rudd government. That's because Rudd's commitment to the racist policies of the NT Intervention are a certain recipe for increasing Aboriginal disadvantage.

In his March report-card speech, the key "evidence" of progress in closing the gap was the NT Intervention policies of government land acquisition, welfare quarantining and the dismantling of CDEP.

Now we are seeing assimilationist Intervention policies being rolled out nationally. Yet all evidence points to the devastating effect everywhere they have been imposed.

Here STICS exposes the gap between Rudd's rhetoric and the reality of his policies:

## HEALTH

Rudd: "Almost 13,000 child health checks have also been undertaken."

Dr Hilary Tyler, a medical specialist in Central Australia, says: "**Many of the health practitioners involved in the screenings had little or no experience in the area. Many children were referred for unnecessary investigations at great cost, causing further disruption to existing services.**"

**We are not aware of any evidence that supports the health related components of the NTER. Specifically with respect to health checks there is no evidence that this measure increases the health of children in the long term if other factors are not also addressed."**

The Australian Medical Association has estimated that \$700 million is needed to bring up to minimum standard the basic infrastructure needed to maintain health, such as water and sewage.

Recent reports from Sunrise Health Services which operate in nine remote communities across the NT show increasing rates of anaemia, a clear sign of greater poverty and young Aboriginal women refusing to come into the health services until their third trimester of pregnancy. Petrol sniffing is also on the rise in some communities in East Arnhem, exacerbating social problems.

## INCOME MANAGEMENT

Rudd (Report-card 2009): "I know that income management is controversial, but we have maintained it for a simple reason-it has been shown to work in many communities. It helps to protect vulnerable groups such as women, children and the elderly by enabling the purchase of food and other essentials."

The racist blanket quarantining of welfare for Indigenous people across the NT has made it harder for people to access to food and basic products. The scheme requires half of each person's welfare be distributed in the form of a 'basics card' that can only be spent in certain shops on certain products. But in the Northern Territory people travel vast distances between remote communities and towns to get to allocated stores. Negotiating these cards and the centrelink systems that provide them, has led to people being driven away from homelands while they struggle to access their entitlements in town.

Aboriginal people have referred to the use of the 'basics card' as a 'shame-job' and some older people call it '**going back to the ration card days**'.

Use of the cards are complicated as people can't tell the current balance until they get to the register, in some cases forcing people to leave behind trolleys of food they can't afford, and people are reporting experiencing increasing racism as they are forced to line up in separate supermarket queues to access the card system.

Recently, the basics card system went down for 3-4 days, leaving people without any access to food. Reports of Centrelink losing money from people's accounts are common.

Rather than assisting women, children and the elderly to obtain essential needs, the income management scheme, has made access to essentials more difficult. In a statement issued by the Prescribed Area Peoples Alliance (PAPA) women's group in last September "**A blanket approach to Income Management is the wrong way. Income management is bringing everyone into town. People don't want to have to come into town**".

## HOUSING

Rudd (Report-card 2009): "Houses are being built. Since the end of 2007, 80 houses have been completed or are nearing completion in remote communities."

Despite the fact that 80 is a pathetic number of houses to have claimed to have been built in almost two years of the Intervention, this is also a blatant lie. The Northern Territory's peak housing group says no new houses have been built for central Australia's Indigenous population since the roll out of the federal intervention in 2007.

"It is a very big ask and big amount of money, but the reality is that particularly no Indigenous people have benefited from the amount of dollars that have been given to the Territory, certainly in the last 12 months." Says the group's Jill Mead.

27 of the houses Rudd claims have been built were commissioned prior to the Intervention. Shamefully, a further 50 were built for the sole use of the non-Indigenous Government Business Managers imposed on remote communities. Thus, since the Intervention at most 3 houses have been built to deal with the desperate over-crowding in Northern Territory communities which has been reported as up to 30 people per house.

While Rudd talks about the 'blight of homelessness' his government is enforcing policies aimed at removing thousands of people from their homes in remote areas deemed "unviable".

Instead of addressing the overcrowding issues Indigenous Affairs Minister Jenny Macklin has boasted the government has been pursuing 'an aggressive land tenure reform agenda'. Only 16 of the 73 communities 'prescribed' under the Intervention laws are being offered any new housing, which is conditional on the signing over of their land to the government under long term leases between 40 and 99 years.

Since Rudd's speech Jenny Macklin has announced the national roll-out of the Intervention policy that only grants housing to communities that sign control of their land to the Government:

"The Australian Government minimum requirements in this regard are... government must have access to and control of the land on which construction will proceed for a minimum period of 40 years."

This policy will effect a quarter of the Indigenous population nationally.

This is a complete back-flip for Macklin, who argued against the Howard government policy in 2007, saying land tenure reform should not be a condition of funding for basic services.

It could also mean the end of Indigenous housing providers, which inherited former missions and reserves in the 1980s. It would mean the 'mainstreaming' of tenancy agreements for many Aboriginal housing tenants, who at present get houses based on need rather than income. In effect the policy represents a 'compulsory acquisition' of, in many cases, substantial community assets built up over several decades by Aboriginal organisations.

**"We want the Government to stop blackmailing us. We want houses, but we will not sign any leases over our land, because we want to keep control of our country, our houses, and our property"** reads a statement to Jenny Macklin signed by 236 Yuendumu residents.